agricultural season the Vaddars accept other work also for extra wages.

The Erkalas earn their livelihood through a variety of means. The menfolk are hunters. They are also adept in the use of snares and traps. They train hunting dogs and use them effectively for chasing and tracking wounded animals. When they succeed in getting some game, they retain a part of it for their domestic consumption and sell the rest to the villagers. The women beg in the countryside by singing songs and narrating legends. They also do some fortune-telling. Family earnings are supplemented by basket-making, a task at which both men and women work. They also rear pigs.

THE MADIGAS

The Madigas are the lowest caste in Shamirpet. Economically they constitute the poorest section of the community. While the Malas, who are also untouchables but a degree higher than the Madigas, either cultivate their own land or work as farm labourers for daily wages, the Madigas affiliate themselves to the households of the substantial agriculturists in the village. According to the size of the land-holding of the cultivator, one or more Madiga families permanently attach themselves to him. At every stage of agricultural operations during the year the attached Madiga, and his wife and children, work in the fields of their master. They are not paid any daily wages. After the crops are harvested they have to go and 'beg' in the master's fields or threshing grounds. The conventions of the community have prescribed the rates of payment, mostly on the basis of the area of land under cultivation and the yield during the particular harvest. Thus for a certain area a basic minimum must be given; but if on account of good crops the yield has been high it is expected that the affiliated Madiga family would be given a proportionately larger share. In former times there used to be considerable compulsion, and, being in no position to protest, the Madigas had to slave for their masters, who could be quite ruthless. If the master was kind and considerate, they regarded it as their good luck. On the whole it was advisable for them to tolerate even a bad master, for any protests or refusal to do the allotted work on their part would eventually have meant their being forced to leave the village. Now, of course, conditions have changed, and Madigas do not any longer put up with indig-

1: Dube E-6 (T951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

nities, unreasonable harshness in behaviour or rough handling. Payments differ on the basis of the quality and quantity of work they turn out, and also partly on the nature and temperament of the employer. Slow and lazy workers are paid the barest minimum, while the experienced and the efficient earn much more. In the words of a Madiga, 'If we do not work well, who will pay us? If we do very little work and that too badly, we get what we deserve in the end. If we do not work well we cannot afford to be sensitive; we have to be thick-skinned to stand the abuse of our master. But if we work hard and earn our wages by the sweat of our brow, the master has to treat us well.' To quote another informant: 'Some masters are large-hearted. They make us work hard, but they feed us well. Others expect us to work like oxen, but when it comes to feeding us they dole out mere handfuls as if we were little calves. They always grumble and curse, but when it is time for making payment to us they seem to forget that we too must have a morsel to fill our bellies and a yard of cloth to cover our bodies.' In addition to what the Madiga families get by 'begging' at the time of harvesting, during the busy agricultural season they are fed once a day by the master. According to convention, the master should give a new cloth once every year to each individual from the attached Madiga family who has worked in his fields.

Very few Madigas possess any land worth mentioning, and therefore independent cultivation by them is almost negligible. But they have several other additional means of subsistence open to them. They have to dispose of the dead cattle in the village. As they do not refrain from carrion, this constitutes one source of food supply for them. They are also entitled to get one half of the hide of the dead animal; the other half belongs to the owner. From the owner's share of the hide the Madigas have to make for him such leather articles as he may require for agricultural purposes. Several Madiga families cure hides and work in leather; others earn a part of their living by playing drums and pipes at ceremonial occasions.

2. AGRICULTURE

The settled area of Shamirpet, including the two neighbouring hamlets, is spread over an area of 58 acres. Out of this Shamirpet proper occupies 31·4 acres. In the land surrounding the settlement,

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17
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relating to work are different. Among them also, labourers are hired for heavy manual labour, such as carrying loads; but menfolk do not object to ploughing their own fields, nor avoid out-of-door work. Of course, the women mainly look after the management of their household affairs and are never expected to earn for the family's support.

The conditions on the two lower levels are more or less similar to one another. Unlike the two upper levels, the menfolk from these groups can be compelled to do government work on a nominal payment. They do most of their work with the assistance provided by the members of the family itself. Even when labourers are engaged by the 'average' people, members of the family continue to work side by side with hired men and women. On both these levels women have comparatively greater freedom. They work out of doors, assist the menfolk in their agricultural activities and crafts, and go out for marketing. Women from 'average' families work mostly in their own homes and in family fields, but during the busy agricultural season they can work for wages as well. This is not regarded as derogatory in any sense. In the poor families, on the other hand, women have to work very hard for, besides doing their quota of work in the running of the home and assisting the husband in agriculture and caste occupation, they have to accept occasional work for wages. Among some of the lower castes, women are expected to work and earn for the upkeep of the family.

4. DIET

The standard of living of a family is judged very often from the quality and quantity of its food. In describing the status and standard of a family, people generally say 'they eat well', 'they live somehow, eating the little that they can grow' or 'they live like animals, eating even wild leaves, flowers and roots'. However, the basic diet of the people consists of rice, millets, lentils, meat and fish. The difference in standards of living is judged by the quantity and kind of rice eaten, the frequency of meat intake in the diet and by the use of spices, fats and oils, jaggery and sugar in the food. Green and powdered red chillies are used by all classes of people in considerable quantities. Vegetables are grown in the backyards during the rainy season, and eaten when ready. When